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Title: Need to ensure safety of Indian fishermen in Indian seas.

SHRI A. SAMPATH (ATTINGAL): Thank you, Chairman, Sir. Today, the Italian Ship Enrica Lexie may be leaving India. I am raising a very important issue in this august House. On February 15th two traditional fishermen, who went to the sea to earn their bread, were short dead. It was a cold blooded brutal murder by Italian Marines in the Indian Waters. Anyway, I am not going into the details of the case because that litigation is pending before the court of law and even the Apex Court has taken that matter very seriously.

Sir, I would like to get your help also in this matter because ten States have coastal areas in India. Our coastal area stretches out to more than 5,500 kms. It means that we are having a coastal area which is more than the coastal area which is enjoyed by some of the richest nations of the world.

Lakhs and lakhs of fishermen are depending upon the sea. As you also know, since 1991, hundreds of foreign ships and trawlers are ploughing throughout the coastal areas of India. What happens is that the poor people, the poor fishermen do not get the fish catch so they are forced to go to the high seas.

Now, even if the Italian Government is right – I am not saying that they are correct in their version, but they say that the incident happened at 22 nautical miles from the sea-shore – but our traditional fishermen are demanding that they should be given protection up to 60 nautical miles from the coastal belt. If that is not given by our agencies, our system, that is, the Indian Navy, the Coast Guard and the Enforcement Agencies...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please come to the point. This is 'Zero Hour', it is not a debate. You state what you want from the Government.

SHRI A. SAMPATH: Sir, this is a very serious matter. It not only concerns my State, but your State also and some North-Indian States also. The fishermen of these States are afraid of foreign ships. Anything can happen to any fisherman at any time in Indian seas.

I would like to know whether we are supreme, whether we are sovereign in our Waters or other Marines or foreign ships are supreme in our Waters. This has happened and this is a very sad incident. This is one of the most tragic incidents and in this matter it is not that the private contractors or private security guards have opened fire on fishermen, the fire was opened by Italian Marines. They are under the direct control of the Italian Government. There may be question of immunity; there may be questions of sovereignty...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have already stated that the matter is in the court, why are you getting agitated?

SHRI A. SAMPATH: Sir, I am concerned about the lives of the fishermen. So, Sir, I would like to appeal to the Government of India that there should be coordination between the Government of India's agencies and State Government agencies; there should be coordination between the Navy, the Coast Guard, the Marine Enforcement Agencies and the Home Affairs Ministry also. This is a very serious matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri M.B. Rajesh and Shri P.K. Biju are allowed to associate themselves with the above matter raised by Shri A. Sampath.